

What is claimed is:

1. A method of closing a pair of clamping arms of an endoscopic grasping tool surgical instrument, the pair of clamping arms being anchored to and within a tubular sheath in an opposed, normally open relation to one another and being of the type having jaws with distal tips and heels and having wrists proximal to the jaws, wherein the method comprises the steps of:

urging the arms together so that they meet at their wrists while the jaws remain open; and

then urging the jaws together so that they meet first at their distal tips and last at their heels.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising providing a drive chassis disposed within the sheath, said drive chassis being operably coupled to the clamping arms for urging the arms together as the chassis moves distally.

3. The method of claim 2 further comprising moving the drive chassis distally using a drive head of a handle to cause the urging the arms together.

4. The method of claim 2 wherein said drive chassis comprises camming surfaces and said each pair of clamping arms comprises camming ramps, and further comprising engaging said camming surfaces with said camming ramps to cause the urging of the arms together.

5. The method of claim 4 further comprising maintaining separation of corresponding arms of said two pair of clamping arms by positioning at least one lug on said camming surfaces.

6. A method of ratcheting the closure of a pair of jaws of an endoscopic grasping tool surgical instrument comprising the steps of:
 - providing a pivotally mounted actuator handle operatively coupled to the jaws, said handle having a drive head which moves distally to effect jaw closure and said drive head having teeth formed thereon; and
 - providing a pawl positioned for engagement with the teeth so as to prevent proximal movement of the drive head after it has moved distally.
7. The method of claim 6 wherein the pawl is comprised of two tines of unequal length so that each tine engages the teeth alternately with the other, as the head moves distally.
8. A method of advancing a surgical cutter of an endoscopic grasping tool surgical instrument comprising:
 - providing two pairs of clamping arms, the arms of each pair being disposed in opposed relation to each other;
 - providing the surgical cutter disposed between the pairs of arms and supported for reciprocating longitudinal movement between an advanced position in which the cutter occupies at least part of an envelope of space defined by and between two pairs of jaws of the pair of arms and a retractable position in which the cutter is proximal to the envelope;
 - providing a handle having a drive head operable between a jaws open position and a jaws closed position;
 - providing a drive rod having a distal end operatively coupled to the cutter and a proximal end in the handle;
 - providing a drive plate operatively coupled to the distal end of the drive rod;

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moving the cutter to a cutter advanced position by moving the drive plate; and

blocking movement of the cutter to the cutter advanced position by the drive head when the drive head is not in the jaws closed position.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising providing a drive chassis having a proximal position adjacent to the drive head and being operably coupled to the clamping arms so as to move the jaws together as the chassis moves distally and further comprising moving the drive head distally to cause the drive chassis to move distally to move the jaws to a jaws closed position.

10. The method of claim 8 further comprising moving the cutter to a cutter retracted position by moving the drive plate.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein the moving the cutter to a cutter advanced position comprises moving the cutter to a position wherein a cutting edge of the cutter does not protrude outside the envelope.